



# APPL

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**ASK MAGAZINE:** By practitioners for practitioners.

## ASK VOLUME ONE:

## PRACTICES

### Supplier Integration by Richard Day

A mission's success often depends on the performance of our suppliers. In a very real sense, suppliers perform relative to how well they are integrated within the larger team. To help suppliers feel like part of the team, the Project Manager should welcome them immediately upon their selection. Use the most personal vehicle available, such as a face-to-face meeting. The more familiar the project manager becomes with the suppliers the better able he or she will be to develop a strategy for using them. It's a good idea to assess the strengths and weaknesses of suppliers with evaluation materials. You can also use whatever past performance information may be available. The project manager's main focus should be developing a positive, long-term relationship with his or her suppliers. Good ones are hard to come by. You want to make sure the good ones realize you appreciate them.

#### Procedures

1. Welcome supplier to the team immediately upon selection.
2. Establish regular communication, especially with key personnel and executive management.
3. Independently assess supplier strengths and weaknesses using evaluation materials and all available past performance information.
4. Visit supplier's facility as frequently as possible.
5. Invite supplier to events at your site and/or major integration site.
6. Continue to build the relationship after delivery.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Day serves on the Advisory Board of NASA's Academy of Program and Project Leadership. He is the senior executive at Goddard Space Flight Center responsible for the formulation of systems management policy and guidelines. He has earned the NASA Medal for Outstanding Leadership and the NASA Medal for Exceptional Service.

#### What you **MUST** communicate to your suppliers:

1. Describe mission, importance, and relevance.
2. Communicate your vision of mission success.
3. Emphasize supplier's role and importance to mission success.
4. Open discussion of mutual strengths and weaknesses.

### Meeting the Supplier

On a recent visit to one of our suppliers, I had the opportunity to meet with some key employees and thank them personally for the fine work their people were doing in building hardware for one of our missions. Everyone I spoke with gave me confidence that we had made the right decision in choosing this supplier for the job. We toured the plant and I was able to witness first hand the dedication of the employees in providing NASA with a quality product. Following the tour, management arranged for me to speak at a gathering that included nearly everyone in the company. The employees listened intently as I spoke, and I noticed several of them smiling as I praised their work and the important contributions they were making to NASA. Afterwards I shook hands and spoke with several of them individually. It was my pleasure to listen to them talk about their work and how proud they were to be involved with NASA. I thanked each and told them that coming here and getting to know them like this was truly the highlight of my trip.

*For a complete description of this visit, see Project Management Success Stories: Lessons of Project Leaders, Laufer and Hoffman, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, pp. 168-170.*

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